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Brief Notes on Peacetime Emergencies and Disasters. Nov. 23, 1973. 2
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BRIEF NOTES

PEACETIME EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

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Alberta
DISASTER SERVICES

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BRIEF NOTES

ON

PEACETIME EMERGENCIES

AND

DISASTERS

A L B E R T A
Disaster Services
23 November 1973

DEFINITIONS

(For the purpose of emergency planning)

Emergency

- means a present or imminent event which requires prompt co-ordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of people or to limit damage to property.

Peacetime Disaster

- means a calamity caused by accident or by the forces of nature and which has resulted or may result in serious harm to the safety, health or welfare of people, or in widespread damage to property.

THREAT OF PEACETIME DISASTERS IN ALBERTA

GENERAL

Major disasters, causing widespread destruction and loss of life, occur with alarming frequency throughout the world. Although Alberta has been singularly fortunate in this regard in the past, increasing densities of population and the growth of industries using dangerous materials will increase the potential for disasters in the province, whether they be brought about by the forces of nature, by accident, or through the carelessness of people.

SOME DISASTROUS EVENTS IN ALBERTA'S HISTORY

Coal Mine Explosions

Bellevue,	1910	-	31 killed
Hillcrest,	1914	-	189 killed
Brazeau,	1941	-	32 killed

Slides. A rock slide in 1903 completely buried the village of Frank, killing 66 people.

Transportation Accident. A school bus/freight train crash at Lamont in 1960 killed 17 students and injured 26.

Epidemics. The influenza epidemic of 1910 hit 30,000 people, 3,259 of whom died.

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TYPES OF POTENTIAL DISASTERS IN ALBERTA

Natural Disasters

Floods - seasonal or geographic
- flash floods

Storms - blizzards
- ice storms
- tornadoes

Slides - snow
- rock
- mud

Drought

Forest Fires

Epidemics

Man-made Disasters

Transportation Accidents

Explosions
Fires
Escaping toxic gases
Oil Spills

Disruption of Utilities and Services
- electricity
- gas
- water
- telephone

Collapse of structures

Mass Poisoning

Water Pollution

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HUMAN REACTION TO DISASTER

SOME MYTHS AND FACTS

Many persons have some deeply entrenched but false ideas about how people react to disasters. These misconceptions are frequently reinforced by exaggerated and sensational news coverage.

MYTHS	FACTS
People are prone to panic in a disaster situation.	People seldom panic. Exception - when they perceive an immediate danger, and escape routes appear to be limited and even these are closing.
Survivors are inclined to widespread looting.	Looting by survivors is extremely rare.
Survivors are usually dispirited and display low morale.	Community morale is usually high immediately after a disaster and most uninjured survivors will join in to help the less fortunate.
Victims of a disaster usually are dazed and in shock	Survivors are not immobilized, but react in a positive manner to help themselves and their fellow victims.

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MYTHS	FACTS
Because of the overwhelming damage to the community's resources, local government is unable to effectively handle emergency tasks.	Even after major disasters, the resources remaining in the community are usually sufficient to maintain the survivors for days and sometimes weeks. However, if there were no plans, available resources may not be used effectively.

Convergence - One common reaction to disaster is the convergence phenomenon -- of people, materials and messages. Planners and leaders engaged in disaster operations must expect this convergence and be prepared to institute measures to control it, otherwise it will seriously hamper the operations.

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BASICS OF DISASTER OPERATIONS

Although it is true that the detailed methods of dealing with different types of disasters may vary, there are some general, but basic principles which apply to all effective disaster operations. These are:

GOVERNMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGEMENT.

PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS FOR WARNING OFFICIALS AND THE PUBLIC ARE ESSENTIAL.

SPEEDY MOBILIZATION OF HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES IS REQUIRED.

SERVICE HEADS MUST REACT SPEEDILY AT SCENE OF DISASTER -- THEN MEET TO PLAN FURTHER ACTION.

CO-ORDINATION OF OPERATIONS IS VITAL.

PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION, COLLATION AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION ARE REQUIRED.

ADEQUATE INFORMATION, ADVICE AND DIRECTION TO THE PUBLIC IS A MUST.

Does your Community's plan embrace the above principles?

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SUGGESTED STEPS

IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF

MUNICIPAL PEACETIME DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

PEACETIME DISASTER SEMINAR	– Introduction to the problem
HAZARD ANALYSIS	– What could happen here?
PEACETIME DISASTER PLAN	– General Plan, Annexes to cover specific hazards
MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT	– Covering: Equipment Personnel Finance
PEACETIME DISASTER EXERCISE	– Test effectiveness of plan.
PUBLIC INFORMATION PROJECT	– Inform local citizens of plan by news media, household brochures etc.